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Campaign Individualisation before and after the Bailout: A Comparison between Greece and Portugal

Marco Lisi and José Santana-Pereira

The elections that took place in Greece and Portugal before and after the intervention of the so-called Troika allow us to examine to what extent the austerity period has affected the nature and style of electoral campaigns, especially in terms of individualisation. Our results show that campaigns in Greece and Portugal were quite different and that Greek candidates supported by the two main parties are more likely to emphasise their role. Yet the short-term impact of the crisis has been negligible, as there have been insignificant shifts in the communicative focus on the personalisation of the agendas and on the means used in the campaign after the intervention of the Troika.

Keywords: Electoral Campaigns; Campaign Individualisation; Troika; Economic Crisis; Greece; Portugal

The personalisation of politics is one of the main transformations experienced by contemporary democracies over the last decades. With the declining relevance of social cleavages, the fading of partisan attachments and the crisis of party organisations, individual politicians play a fundamental role in representative democracies, for example, in structuring the vote, citizen mobilisation and decision-making mechanisms (McAllister 1996; Aarts, Blais & Schmitt 2012; Helms 2012). By and large, the increasing levels of anti-party sentiments are a powerful incentive to downsize the importance of party organisation to the detriment of individual personalities (Farrell 2006).

Within this background of significant changes that contemporary democracies are experiencing, this article aims to explore to what extent and in what type of context candidates may play a more autonomous role in election campaigns. Although the concept of the ‘candidate-centred’ campaign has been widely used in the United States (US) context (Wattenberg 1991), it has been largely neglected in the European context. Until now the literature has assumed European parties centralise their campaigns in both organisational and communicational strategy terms. However, as some authors

have shown (Zittel & Gschwend 2008; Karlsen & Skogerbø 2013), these two components are not necessarily related to each other and can vary separately.

Existing research has shown there is a lot of variation in campaign strategies, especially when we consider the different components that lie behind the style of electioneering. Besides individual factors, this variation has been associated mainly with institutional factors (Giebler & Wessels 2013). Yet this research has neglected the role other contextual factors may play on campaign characteristics. As highlighted in the introduction to this special issue, the financial crisis has caused important changes in terms of attitudes towards representatives, party mobilisation and electoral alignments (Freire et al. 2014). As a consequence, the Eurozone crisis may also affect campaign strategies and the way election campaigns are conducted.

This article examines candidate campaigns by focusing on Greek and Portuguese elections. Our starting point is the theoretical distinction between individualised versus party-centred campaigns (Plasser & Plasser 2002; Karlsen & Skogerbø 2013). We believe these conceptual tools deserve to be empirically investigated, particularly with regard to the influence that short-term factors exert on the type and style of election campaigns. The analysis of campaign strategies in Greece and Portugal allows us to examine to what extent extreme changes in economic conditions affect their characteristics. In this article we focus on the two largest parties in each country with recent experience in government and/or with expectations of forming a government after the election. We believe that for such parties the effect of context in the campaign strategies may be paramount, owing both to their historical record (all have governed these countries in the last decade) and to their nature (catch-all, ideologically diffuse).

Relative to previous studies on campaign strategies, the contribution of this paper is twofold. First, it aims to examine whether and how campaign strategies and styles change over time. In particular, it aims to explore whether a huge external shock, such as the bailouts in Greece and Portugal, has affected candidate campaigns, or whether the main characteristics of election campaigns have remained stable regardless of the important challenges brought about by the economic crisis. Second, by comparing two different countries, the article seeks to evaluate the relative impact of individual determinants across distinct institutional and short-term contextual settings. In doing this, our contribution speaks not only to the literature on election campaigns but also to the debate about party organisational change and recent trends in political representation.

The following section briefly reviews the literature on individualised campaigns and derives the main hypotheses to be tested. The subsequent section deals with data and methods. The fourth section analyses both longitudinal and cross-national variations in terms of candidate campaigns. The fifth elaborates the multivariate model used to test the main determinants of campaign individualisation. The final section summarises the findings and discusses its implications for the role played by political parties and the challenges experienced by contemporary democracies.

Campaign Individualisation and Financial Crisis

The debate on the personalisation of politics has argued that candidate characteristics and performance are of increasing importance for voting behaviour, media coverage and party platforms (McAllister 2007; Adam & Maier 2010; Kriesi 2012; Aarts, Blais & Schmitt 2012). While the processes of modernisation and professionalisation have encouraged the centralisation of electioneering and party-centred campaigns, dramatic changes in political communication tools have increasingly emphasised the figure of the individual politician. This personalisation may involve not only party leaders but also individual candidates. As a consequence, there is now more variation in terms of campaign strategies and instruments (Giebler & Wessels 2013).

As several authors have noted, during election campaigns individual candidates may attempt to increase their autonomy and visibility among voters, mobilising their own resources and developing different strategies. Zittel and Gschwend (2008) have described this phenomenon through the concept of ‘individualised campaigns’, which means that candidates seek a personal vote on the basis of a candidate-centred organisation, candidate-centred campaign agenda and candidate-centred means of campaigning. Karlsen and Skogerbø (2013), on the other hand, distinguish between two dimensions: the communicative focus and the organisational strategy. Individualised campaigns are related to the first dimension, whereas the second aspect is associated with the degree of campaign centralisation. By and large, these studies have found that even where institutional features favour the adoption of centralised party-based campaigns – namely in proportional representation systems – we can still find some degree of candidate personalisation.

While the organisational component is certainly a significant aspect of individualised campaigns, it is also important to take into account candidate perceptions of their role in election campaigns. According to Zittel and Gschwend (2008), this is the ‘normative’ component of candidate individualisation, which should complement the analysis of the objective dimension: that is, the use of personal political communication tools. Following these authors, we add a third dimension: the raising of local and specific issues by candidates. We believe this can give us a more complete picture of candidate campaign strategies and styles.

To the best of our knowledge, there are few longitudinal studies. The case of Israel confirms the trend towards increasing levels of personalisation, although this change happened at both the national and the local level, stimulating both the role and visibility of party candidates (Balmas et al. 2014). The authors formulate the concept of a ‘decentralised campaign’, meaning there is increasing personalisation of a group of individuals who are not party or executive leaders (Balmas et al. 2014). However, when they discuss the empirical evidence supporting this new concept, they emphasise the growing importance of the personal vote or the greater visibility candidates have gained through the adoption of party primaries. While decentralised personalisation may be a useful concept, especially when associated with the study on constituency campaigns, the way these authors employ the concept overlaps to a large extent – at

least in terms of its behavioural component – with the concept of individualised campaigns. The use of decentralised personalisation may be misleading when we examine candidate campaigns, so in this article we prefer to use the terms ‘individualised campaigns’ or ‘candidate personalisation’. In light of this discussion, the impact candidates have on voting behaviour will not be considered here.

According to previous research, campaigns in newer Southern European democracies are relatively personalised and centralised (Pasquino 2001). In Portugal, previous research has found that individual candidates focus their campaign on their respective party and that they depend heavily on the resources offered by party organisations (Lisi 2011, 2013). Based on a candidate survey conducted during the 2009 elections, this research suggests election campaigns in Portugal display a high level of centralisation and that prospective deputies mainly use traditional tools of political communication. In addition, the focus of communication is clearly based on party organisations, while candidate campaigns present a relatively low level of professionalisation, as shown by the use of external consultants, campaign budgets and planning. Finally, candidates play a marginal role in the mobilisation of citizens at the local level and make limited use of new information technologies, two features conventionally associated with post-modern campaigns (Seiceira 2011).

In Greece, party campaigns are also highly centralised and competition takes place mainly at the national level. Papathanassopoulos (2000, p. 54) has argued that, since the 1996 elections, parties have increasingly controlled candidate strategies, especially with regard to their appearance in television programmes. Television-centred campaigning has also been detrimental to mobilisation based on candidate activities at the local level. As for the use of new information technologies, studies on web campaigning in the 2004 elections found that only a small proportion of candidates made use of this communication tool, leading the authors to conclude that Greek campaigns were still characterised by features associated with traditional campaigns (Lappas, Chatzopoulos & Yannas 2008; Mylona 2008). Moreover, the use of the Internet was inversely associated with political experience and party ranking, candidates holding government positions or with a senior party rank being more likely to use traditional tools.

Several factors may account for this high level of centralisation. First, candidate recruitment largely depends on national party bodies, while the party leadership controls the careers of candidates and deputies. Second, the mass media tend to focus on the main party leaders, especially those who compete for government. Third, in both Portugal and Greece party funding is based on public subsidies, and corporate donations to parties or candidates are prohibited. This regulation strengthens the power of parties compared with candidates. Finally, it is also important to consider that the proportional representation system favours party-centred campaigns, thus enhancing the role of party leaders over candidates.

The literature indicates that the degree of campaign individualisation depends, on the one hand, on personal and political background and, on the other, on party characteristics. In terms of the former, incumbents are more likely to have more

resources at their disposal than first-time prospective candidates (Zittel & Gschwend 2008). Empirical studies also show that gender has a significant impact on the style of candidate campaign, men being more prone to personalise their own campaigns than women (Karlsen & Skogerbø 2013).

As for intra-party variation, one important dimension traditionally associated with election campaigns is the type of recruitment used. According to the literature (Carey & Shugart 1995; Giebler & Wessels 2013), more decentralised modes of candidate selection are more prone to lead to individualised campaigns. Finally, it is plausible also to distinguish between party ideologies, left-wing candidates being more likely to engage in a low level of individualised campaigning (Karlsen & Skogerbø 2013).

This brief literature review shows that the impact of the context on the type of candidate campaign is clearly a neglected topic of research. Some studies have already shown that campaign styles and goals may depend on the institutional setting (Giebler & Wüst 2011; Giebler & Wessels 2013). Yet there is no research focusing on the impact different political environments have on campaign personalisation. The economic crisis has significantly hit both Greece and Portugal: the former had to ask for two bailouts between 2010 and 2012, while the latter entered into financial default in April 2011, leading to the fall of the socialist government and the calling of new legislative elections (held on 5 June that year).

The external intervention of the so-called Troika (of the International Monetary Fund [IMF], European Commission [EC] and European Central Bank [ECB]) has had important political, economic and social consequences. In particular, recent studies have examined the effects of the economic crisis on electoral behaviour (Kosmidis 2014; Magalhães 2014), party performance (Bosco & Verney 2012) and political attitudes (Bartels & Bermeo 2014). Yet this strand of research has mainly examined political changes from the citizens' point of view, while party strategies have largely been neglected. We believe the Greek and Portuguese cases are well suited to an analysis of candidate campaigns in different contexts, not only because of the significant impact of the economic crisis but also because of some important institutional differences. This cross-country and longitudinal variation allows us to understand whether campaign styles and goals are the same across different settings.

What are the main expectations concerning the impact of the economic crisis on candidate campaigns? Taking into account the potential effect of the economic crisis on campaign strategies, we argue that the intervention and constraints set by international lenders are likely to foster more individualised campaigns. First, with austerity programmes decided by foreign actors, it becomes more and more difficult to distinguish between party programmes and election platforms (Enyedi 2014). Second, one of the effects of the economic crisis is to reveal crises in party organisations, especially in terms of public opinion. Although disillusionment with parties is a long-term phenomenon, and the increase in negative views of parties is a well-documented trend, several studies have shown that the economic and financial crisis that affected southern Europe has served as a catalyst to the growing distance between parties and citizens (Jalali 2014; Lisi 2014). We believe the combination of increasing popular

discontent with parties (especially with governing parties) and the difficulties of the main parties in responding to the challenges posed by the crisis and in being responsive to their electoral basis is likely to change campaign strategies by emphasising the role of candidates to the detriment of party organisations.

When we analyse the 2011 Portuguese and the 2012 Greek elections, we should notice that the perceptions and conditions associated with the economic crisis were profoundly different. While in Greece two bailouts had already been implemented and their social, economic and political effects were evident, in the Portuguese case when the 2011 elections took place it was still unclear how deep the austerity measures would be and how long they would remain in place. Consequently, our first hypothesis states that the economic crisis is expected to foster more individualised campaigns; we also expect Greek candidates to display stronger effects stemming from the crisis.

Our second hypothesis concerns the institutional setting. In these two quite centralised settings we nevertheless expect higher levels of campaign individualisation in Greece than in Portugal. Several theoretical reasons underlie this expectation.

First, according to a consolidated strand of research, the crucial variable affecting candidate incentives to organise and execute their own campaign strategy and mobilise more personalised resources is related to the characteristics of the electoral system. In particular, proportional systems are supposed to foster more centralised campaigns and increase national coordination and the vertical structure of campaign organisation (Bowler & Farrell 1992; Swanson & Mancini 1996; Farrell 2002). Some case studies on European countries seem to confirm that campaigns are more centralised in proportional systems (Plasser & Plasser 2002; Karlsen & Skogerbo 2013).

In terms of their electoral systems, Greece and Portugal are remarkably different. Although both countries have a proportional system of representation, Greece has three distinct tiers while Portugal has just one. Overall, the Greek electoral system is significantly more disproportional than the Portuguese. The average district magnitude is 5.4 for Greece and 10.5 for Portugal, while the effective threshold is 11.7 for the former compared with 6.5 for the latter (Gallagher & Mitchell 2008; Freire, Moreira & Martins 2008). Moreover, if we consider that in Greece a legal barrier of three per cent is in place and that there was a majority prize of 40 seats (which increased to 50 seats with the 2008 electoral reform), the differences between the two countries are even more manifest.

Another important feature of the electoral system which may affect the degree of individualised campaigns is the type of ballot. Carey and Shugart (1995) pioneered this strand of research by examining how different characteristics of the electoral system affect the incentive to cultivate a personal vote. According to their contribution, the effect of district magnitude interacts with the ballot structure. As the magnitude increases, candidates are more likely to run personalised campaigns when voters may express their preference. By contrast, in closed list systems the relationship is exactly the opposite: only candidates at the top of the list are supposed to emphasise their personality, because in this context the use of personal resources is an instrument for securing selection by party leaders. Empirical findings seem to confirm this

interaction, showing that the capacity of candidates to mobilise (illegal) resources depends on both district magnitude and ballot type (Chang & Golden 2007). Also, in terms of ballot structure there are remarkable differences between Greece and Portugal. In Greece, electors cast a vote for between one and five candidates on a constituency list, depending on the number of seats, while in Portugal the vote is based on closed party lists and voters only have to choose from the political parties.

Beyond the characteristics of the electoral system, Greek and Portuguese campaigns are expected to diverge in terms of individualised campaigns due to the different degree of state centralisation. Several studies have shown (Lundell 2004; Bolleyer 2011), the administrative structure affects the characteristics of party organisation as well as the process of candidate selection. Consequently, it is plausible to expect that the higher the level of decentralisation, the more likely it is candidates will run personalised campaigns. Portugal is one of the most centralised countries in Europe, as is shown by the index of regional authority (Hooghe, Marks & Schakel 2008); in contrast, Greece is relatively more decentralised, receiving a score of 10 (on a scale from zero to 20, ranging from more to less centralisation), while the figure for Portugal is 3.7. Therefore, based on the literature on the impact of the electoral system and state centralisation on candidate personalisation, we expect that, all other things being equal, Greek candidates will present a greater level of personalisation than their Portuguese counterparts.

Our third hypothesis concerns the specific status of the party supporting the candidates during the campaign. The economic crisis may have distinct effects on party and candidate strategies depending on their institutional position. We know that in 'hard-times elections' incumbents compete with the goal of avoiding being blamed for the difficult situation (Magalhães 2014). In addition, Vavreck (2009) has noticed that candidate strategy depends on the context, especially in terms of economic performance. When the economic situation is good, leaders are more likely to focus on this topic; but when the economic performance is negative they prefer to focus on more consensual issues. During economic crises, incumbent parties are more likely to not focus on the national party leaders' performance in order to avoid being punished by voters. From this viewpoint, it is plausible to expect that candidates from incumbent parties will run more personalised campaigns than those from the main opposition parties. Therefore, our third hypothesis is that the emergence of the economic crisis is likely to reinforce the individualised campaigns of incumbent parties compared with those of the opposition. In other words, we expect the status of the party will have a greater impact after than before the bailouts. However, the formation of a technocratic government supported by a grand coalition of the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK; Πανελλήνιο Σοσιαλιστικό Κίνημα) and New Democracy (ND; Νέα Δημοκρατία), which was in power from November 2011 to May 2012, may have blurred the distinction between incumbent and opposition parties; therefore, the comparison between Greece and Portugal also allows us to examine the impact the 'clarity of responsibility' may exert on candidate strategies, especially when it is difficult to find someone to blame for painful austerity measures.

Data and Methods

This article aims to assess the degree of individualised campaigns in both Greece and Portugal before and after the onset of the economic crisis. In order to address this question, we use an original dataset based on a common questionnaire fielded in both countries in two distinct elections. The analysis will proceed in two steps: first, we will use the Comparative Candidate Study dataset (see the introduction to this special issue for more details) to examine the variation of individualised campaigns across the two countries; second, we will run a multivariate model in order to disentangle the main determinants of campaign individualisation in four different contextual settings.

This article focuses only on the candidates from the two most important political parties at the time of the elections: the Socialist Party (PS; Partido Socialista) and the Social Democratic Party (PSD; Partido Social Democrata) in Portugal, and ND and PASOK in Greece. We do this for both substantial and methodological reasons. First, we are particularly interested in the behaviour of candidates and parties that have recently been in government and/or that have greater chances of forming cabinets after the elections. Second, some of the most important factors of campaign individualisation are probably concerned with party characteristics such as party type (catch-all versus ideologically grounded, large versus small in electoral terms, right versus left). Candidates from minor parties usually have quite different opinions and habits in terms of campaign individualisation (due to both lack of resources and a stronger focus on ideology and programmatic contents; see Gibson & Römmele 2001). For these reasons we believe the impact of the financial crisis on campaign strategies should be limited for more ideological or anti-system parties. When dealing with fairly similar parties, such as the PS and PSD in Portugal and PASOK and ND in Greece, most of the factors described above either do not vary or present limited ranges. Therefore, by selecting only the least ideologically grounded and largest parties, we naturally control for the impact of party characteristics on campaign individualisation. Third, there are no data for Greek candidates in 2009 supported by parties other than ND and PASOK, which means that establishing a comparison between the Greek campaign of 2009 and the other three campaigns without acknowledging this important shortcoming would result in a series of imprecise findings. Focusing the paper on the two largest parties in each country does not strike us as a major problem, since the main goal of this article is to compare the general patterns of individualisation and the relative strength of a set of relevant factors and determine if they vary according to the political-institutional (Greece versus Portugal) or economic (pre versus post-bailouts) contexts, rather than proposing a powerful model explaining a considerable amount of the variation in the individualisation of candidate campaigns.

Inspired by Zittel and Gschwend (2008), we selected as dependent variables three different dimensions of the individualisation of campaigns: the communicative focus of the campaign (parties versus candidates, varying between zero, 'Campaign is aimed to attract as much attention as possible to the party', and ten, 'Campaign is aimed to attract as much attention as possible to the candidate'), the campaign agenda (a dummy variable depicting the inclusion of issues that are relevant to the constituency in the campaign)

and the campaign means (varying between zero, ‘no personal resources or strategies used’, and seven, ‘several personal resources or strategies used’).

The key factors in the empirical analysis are country (Portugal versus Greece), campaign timing (before versus after the bailout) and the status of the party supporting the candidates at the time of the election (one = incumbent, zero = opposition).¹ The control variables used in the models cover important socio-demographic characteristics such as age and gender (see Aalberg & Strömbäck 2011; Karlsen & Skogerbo 2013), but also the level at which the candidate nomination was made (three-point scale, ranging from local to national nomination), since decentralised nomination processes lead to more individualisation (Carey & Shugart 1995; Giebler & Wessels 2013).² Ideology is not statistically controlled in the regression models, since in our data framework it is strongly associated with party status (incumbent versus opposition).

In the following section, we proceed with the description of the differences and similarities between Greece and Portugal in terms of the three dimensions of candidate individualisation. Then the relative contribution of each of the independent variables described above is addressed by means of several regressions.

Campaign Individualisation in Portugal and Greece: Empirical Findings

Before focusing on the actual aspects of campaign individualisation – namely the preparation and use of personalised materials – we begin by focusing on the norm regarding the communicative focus of the campaigns. In other words, should campaigns be used to call attention to the political parties or to the candidates? Greek candidates tend to think more about using their campaigns to focus voter attention on themselves than do Portuguese candidates (Table 1). The differences between the two countries are paramount, and achieve statistical significance both before (*t*-test: $t[185] = -4.68$; $p < 0.01$) and after the bailouts (*t*-test: $t[220] = -5.51$; $p < 0.01$). In longitudinal terms, we see that in Greece and Portugal there was no significant shift in the candidates’ communicative focus in 2009 and 2011–12, even if in the case of the

Table 1 Campaign Communicative Focus, Agenda and Resources in Portugal and Greece before and after the Bailout (PS, PSD, PASOK and ND Candidates)

	Portugal 2009	Portugal 2011	Greece 2009	Greece 2012
Communicative focus*	2.2	2.3	4.1	4.7
Campaign agenda (%)†	53.9	35	62	59.9
Personalisation of campaign means (index)‡	2.2	2.1	4.5	4.3

Source: For Greece: Andreadis, Chadjipadelis and Teperoglou (2014a, 2014b); for Portugal: Freire and Viegas (2010) and Freire, Viegas and Lisi (2013). Data calculated by the authors.

Notes: *The values are mean (for each election) on a scale from zero (attract as much attention as possible for my party) to ten (attract as much attention as possible for me). †Percentage of candidates raising constituency-specific issues in the campaign. ‡The values are mean (for each election) on a scale from zero (no personal means used) to seven (all personal means used).

Greek candidates the trend is upward (Portugal's t -test: $t[135] = -1.36$; $p > 0.1$; Greece's t -test = $t[270] = -1.54$; $p > 0.1$).

A second indicator of individualised campaigns concerns the campaign agenda. The interviewees were asked if they raised constituency-specific issues during their campaign, covering issues the party was not tackling at the national or regional levels. Such behaviour is an indicator of individualisation because it detaches the prospective deputies from the national agenda, and allows them to select issues and events in which their own personality, experience or expertise may provide added value in the contest. Once again, Greek candidates tend to adopt this strategy of individualisation more often than Portuguese (Table 1), but the differences are significant only in the most recent election (Chi-square 2009: $\chi^2 [1, N = 184] = 1.20$, $p > 0.1$; chi-square 2011/12: $\chi^2 [1, N = 222] = 10.88$, $p > 0.01$). In Greece, approximately 60 per cent of candidates focused on district-specific issues in both campaigns, while in Portugal a local agenda was implemented by about 35 per cent of the PS and PSD candidates in 2011 – a difference compared with 2009 of almost 20 percentage points ($\chi^2 [1, N = 136] = 4.85$, $p < 0.05$). In Portugal, the post-bailout political context led PS and PSD candidates to adopt independent agendas less often than in 2009 (Table 1).

Let us now focus on the resources and materials used by candidates during the campaign. The majority of Portuguese and Greek candidates from the two main political parties at the time of the election used at least one of the following personal campaign materials and activities: personal posters, personal adverts in the local press, office hours, social gatherings, personal flyers, personal media spots and a personal website (Figure 1). In this article, we understand social gatherings and office hours to be individualised campaign activities because they allow candidates to put themselves at the centre of the campaign, and allow the voter to deal directly with them.

Social gatherings are the most common personalised activities carried out by candidates in both Portugal and Greece, and their importance was not substantially changed following the bailouts. Regarding the other six strategies, a comparative

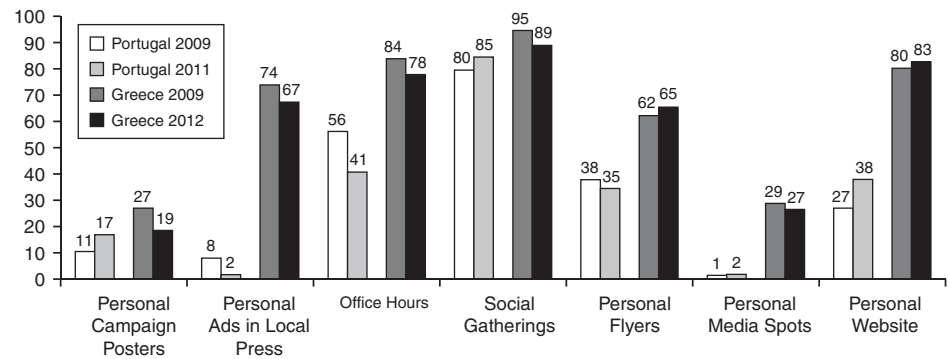


Figure 1 Specific Campaign Means Used by Candidates (%)

Source: See Table 1. Data calculated by the authors.

Note: Percentage of candidates who mentioned using the specific campaign mean.

analysis suggests the use of the media (local newspapers, broadcasters, the Internet) is much more common in Greece than in Portugal, as is the preparation of personal flyers and the habit of establishing office hours to receive voters. In longitudinal terms, there is a great degree of stability between the campaigns of 2009 and 2011–12, even though use of the Internet increased considerably in Portugal, while newspaper adverts and office hours were implemented as campaign strategies by a smaller proportion of Portuguese candidates. Also, in Portugal, less than 40 per cent of the candidates used a personal web page in their campaign, the Portuguese figures being substantially lower than those found in Greece (Figure 1).

The data discussed above were used in the creation of an index of personalisation of the campaign means, varying between zero (if no personalised means were used) and seven (if all the personal means were implemented in the campaign). It is no surprise that Greek candidates used, on average, around four out of seven individualised campaign means, while the average for the Portuguese candidates was around two in both the 2009 and the 2011 elections. In Greece, personal means were used more often than in Portugal both before (t -test: $t[176] = -10.65$; $p < 0.01$) and after the bailout (t -test: $t[217] = -9.50$; $p < 0.01$). Finally, we found strong patterns of within-country stability in the campaigns conducted by candidates from the two larger political parties before and after the bailouts (Table 1).

In summary, the analysis above suggests that, with few exceptions, there has been a considerable degree of stability in the way candidates supported by the main parties conducted their campaigns before and after the crisis. The data also suggest that levels of campaign individualisation were often much greater in Greece than in Portugal. This empirical evidence does not allow us to support our first hypothesis, concerning the effects of the crisis, but our second hypothesis, concerning the differences between Portugal and Greece, is confirmed.

Factors of Campaign Individualisation in Portugal and Greece, before and after the Bailout

In the previous section, we saw that the bailout context seems not to have caused significant changes in the degree to which candidates supported by the two most important parties in each country personalised their campaigns, and that there were significant differences between the Portuguese and the Greek campaigns. In this section, we aim to strengthen that conclusion by means of an individual-level analysis, as well as aiming to assess whether there was a shift in the factors explaining campaign individualisation before and after the bailout. After 2009 we expect the impact of contextual variables (that is, the status of the supporting party as incumbent or opposition) to be greater with respect to other factors.

For each dependent variable, four regression models are presented. Model 1 is a general model for Portugal and Greece, which includes the control variables and a dummy for country in order to assess the importance of the institutional setting in the patterns of campaign individualisation. Model 2 also includes a dummy for the year of

election and an interaction term aiming to test whether the impact of the economic crisis was indeed greater in Greece than in Portugal. Models 3 and 4 are country specific and designed to assess the impact of the financial crisis and the attitudes and behaviour of candidates supported by the incumbent parties within each country.

The first set of regressions takes the communicative focus of the campaign as the dependent variable (Table 2). The results support the conclusions derived from the country-level analysis: the differences between Portuguese and Greek candidates are paramount even when we control for several other factors, which means they are probably due to differences in the institutional arrangements in these two countries. Also, the bailouts do not seem to have caused substantial differences in the normative focus of the campaigns in Portugal or Greece. Finally, replicating the results from several other studies (Aalberg & Strömbäck 2011; Karlsen & Skogerbo 2013), female candidates are less prone to expressing the idea the campaigns should focus on them instead of on the parties supporting them.

Let us now focus on specific country models. In Portugal, aside from gender, only the interaction between election year and party status is statistically significant; but it unexpectedly assumes a negative value (Table 2). This means that in Portugal candidates from the incumbent party display lower levels of normative campaign individualisation after the bailout. Interestingly enough, the incumbent party and the party leader in 2009 and 2011, were the same – the PS and José Sócrates. However, the status with respect to the government only becomes significant in the differentiation between PS and PSD candidates in 2011. A possible explanation for this is that in 2011 PS candidates were more left-wing (and therefore less prone to personalisation compared with PSD candidates)

Table 2 Linear Regression Models: Personalisation of the Campaign’s Communicative Focus

	Model 1 (all)	Model 2 (all)	Model 3 (Portugal)	Model 4 (Greece)
Intercept	5.21*** (1.01)	5.05*** (1.13)	2.22** (0.97)	6.34*** (1.24)
Gender (F.)	− 1.59*** (0.38)	− 1.57*** (0.38)	− 1.71*** (0.44)	− 1.30** (0.43)
Age	− 0.01 (0.02)	− 0.01 (0.02)	− 0.01 (0.02)	− 0.03 (0.02)
Level of nomination	− 0.23 (0.19)	− 0.20 (0.19)	− 0.08 (0.19)	− 0.22 (0.22)
Greece	2.61*** (0.35)	2.41*** (0.52)		
Year (after bailout)		0.23 (0.50)	0.78 (0.50)	1.01 (0.64)
Country × Year		0.25 (0.71)		
Status (incumbent)			0.45 (0.56)	1.08* (0.63)
Year × Status			− 1.84* (0.07)	− 1.05 (0.85)
R ² (%)	23.3	23.7	16.2	7.3
N	326	326	119	215

Source: See Table 1.

Notes: Dependent variable varies from zero (attention focused on parties) to ten (attention focused on candidates). Non-standardised coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. In the first two models, weights were used in order to balance the proportion of Portuguese and Greek candidates included in the analysis. The proportions of candidates interviewed before and after the bailouts are similar. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.10$.

than in 2009. This hypothesis is not confirmed by the data, since although in 2011 the PS indeed became less and the PSD more prone to personalisation, the average ideological position of PS and PSD candidates remained virtually unchanged (3.1 and 5.9, respectively, in 2009; 3.3 and 6.1, respectively, in 2011).

In the case of Greece the pattern is different (Table 2). In 2009 the dummy variable 'Year' was zero and candidates from the incumbent party showed a greater tendency towards focusing the campaign on their own personalities than opposition party candidates. Contrary to our expectations, the interaction term between election year and party status is not statistically significant, which means party status had no impact on the level of normative campaign individualisation after the bailout. Considering that between 2009 and 2012 there was a slight, statistically insignificant, increase in the average normative individualisation of campaigns in Greece, these patterns may have more to do with the adoption of a different position by PASOK candidates, who were more favourable to focusing on the candidate instead of the party in 2012, and slightly less left-wing than in 2009 (3.8 and 3.1, respectively, on an 11-point scale in which ten means 'right'). Finally, the effect of gender is significant and in the expected direction.

The next set of logistic regressions tests the impact of our model on the probability of having raised a constituency-specific issue during the campaign. Models 1 and 2 show that the factors being analysed do not explain a great amount of the variation in this dependent variable (Table 3). The weak differences identified between Portugal and Greece are not significant before the bailout elections, that is, when the dummy 'Year' is kept at the value zero in Model 2. Model 2 shows that there are significant differences before and after the bailout in Portugal (that is, when the dummy 'Greece' is held constant at the value zero), in that candidates were less prone to addressing local issues in 2011.

Table 3 Logistic Regression Models: Personalisation of the Campaign's Agenda

	Model 1 (all)	Model 2 (all)	Model 3 (Portugal)	Model 4 (Greece)
Intercept	-0.44 (0.86)	-0.16 (0.89)	-0.60 (0.97)	-0.86 (0.87)
Gender (F.)	-0.42 (0.30)	-0.42 (0.30)	-0.47 (0.45)	-0.42 (0.30)
Age	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.01)
Level of nomination	0.21 (0.15)	0.20 (0.15)	0.13 (0.22)	0.29* (0.15)
Greece	0.54* (0.28)	0.27 (0.40)		
Year (after bailout)		-0.68* (0.40)	-0.68 (0.50)	0.55 (0.45)
Country × Year		0.62 (0.57)		
Status (incumbent)			-0.10 (0.55)	1.10** (0.46)
Year × Status			-0.01 (0.82)	-1.20* (0.61)
Nagelkerke R^2 (%)	5.6	7.3	7.7	6.9
N	326	326	110	216

Source: See Table 1.

Notes: Dependent variable varies between zero (no constituency-specific issues raised) and one (constituency-specific issues raised). Non-standardised coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. In the first two models, weights were used in order to balance the proportion of Portuguese and Greek candidates included in the analysis. The proportions of candidates interviewed before and after the bailouts are similar. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.10$.

The results of Model 3 show that our set of independent variables is not successful in explaining variation in the focus of campaign agendas in Portugal (Table 3). Even the effect of the bailout, which has been identified in the country-level analysis and in Model 2, disappears, not achieving statistical significance when several controls are included and the number of cases in the analysis is reduced. In Greece, beyond nomination level, the status of the party is important in 2009 (when the dummy ‘Year’ is kept at the value zero): members of the incumbent party were more likely to develop an independent campaign agenda than members of PASOK. The interaction term between incumbent and year of election is also significant, but in an unexpected way: it seems incumbent-supported candidates focused less on local topics after the bailout than before (Table 3).

The following models deal with campaign individualisation in terms of the means used (Table 4). Once again, Models 1 and 2 show there were no significant changes before and after the bailouts in Portugal and Greece, and that, all others things being equal, the Greek setting fosters personalisation of resources to a greater extent than the Portuguese. Also, and quite surprisingly, the level of nomination has a significant effect on the number of individualised resources used: the more centralised the level of nomination, the more individualised the resources used. This may be so for four reasons: first, candidates nominated at the national level may have easier access to the financial resources necessary to implement individualised campaigns; second, they may be part of the party elite, and therefore their personality and other individual characteristics may be considered an added value in the campaign; third, candidates nominated at the national level may have weaker links with the constituency, and the individualisation of their campaign resources may be a strategy to create stronger bonds between external candidates and local voters;

Table 4 Linear Regression Models: Personalisation of the Means Used in the Campaign

	Model 1 (all)	Model 2 (all)	Model 3 (Portugal)	Model 4 (Greece)
Intercept	2.82*** (0.63)	2.89*** (0.65)	3.36*** (0.70)	3.87*** (0.61)
Gender (F.)	−0.24 (0.22)	−0.24 (0.22)	−0.50 (0.32)	−0.07 (0.21)
Age	−0.02 (0.01)	−0.02 (0.01)	−0.03** (0.01)	−0.03 (0.01)
Level of nomination	0.20* (0.11)	0.20* (0.11)	0.20 (0.15)	0.21** (0.11)
Greece	2.17*** (0.20)	2.17*** (0.30)		
Year (after bailout)		−0.11 (0.29)	0.08 (0.35)	0.38 (0.32)
Country × Year		0.01 (0.40)		
Status (incumbent)			−0.35 (0.39)	0.47 (0.31)
Year × Status			−0.40 (0.56)	−0.81* (0.42)
R ² (%)	38.2	38.3	12.1	3.7
N	317	317	101	215

Source: See Table 1.

Notes: Dependent variable varies from zero (no personal means used) to seven (all personal means used). Non-standardised coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. In the first two models, weights were used in order to balance the proportion of Portuguese and Greek candidates included in the analysis. The proportions of candidates interviewed before and after the bailouts are similar. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.10$.

fourth, the national party leadership may decide to select candidates with greater resources and more political visibility.

The country model does a poor job in the case of Portugal, since the only important factor seems to be the age of the candidate: younger candidates used individualised means more often than older ones (Table 4). In Greece, the interaction between election year and party status displays a statistically significant negative coefficient. Therefore, it seems that candidates supported by the incumbent party used fewer individualised means after the bailout than they did before. Unlike in Greece, the impact of nomination level does not achieve statistical significance in Portugal.

Conclusions

This article sought to shed some light on the potential effects of the economic crisis in campaign strategies implemented by candidates supported by the main political parties in Portugal and Greece. By and large, we could not confirm that the massive austerity policies implemented since 2008 have had a powerful impact on campaign strategies in Greece or Portugal. With regard to communicative focus and campaign means, the degree of individualisation has remained unchanged during the post-crisis period. The only important effect deals with the emphasis candidates give to local issues in Portugal. Overall, these findings indicate that the effects of the economic crisis on campaign style are very hard to see, and may have more to do with specific political parties (as we will see below). Therefore, our first hypothesis does not receive empirical support. One reason for this pattern of continuity may be associated with the nature of the electoral process. As Papathanassopoulos has noted (2000, p. 58), 'voters choose between different political parties and not between individual candidates', a situation that we can find in both countries. Moreover, despite the decline of partisan identities after the crisis, a great proportion of voters in both Greece and Portugal still use partisan cues for their voting choice. Finally, the high degree of centralisation of party organisations may also foster continuity in the way campaigns are organised, regardless of the specificities of the context. As several studies suggest (Demertzis et al. 2005; Seiceira 2011), even after the technological change made available by internet, political parties tend to reproduce old models of electioneering. This means that campaign characteristics display a high degree of resilience to external changes or constraints. Having said this, however, we would sound a note of caution because this research deals with the immediate consequences of the financial crisis on campaign strategies. It remains to be seen what changes the economic crisis will produce in the future. In other words, it is too early to say how and by how much the crisis contributed in altering the way parties and candidates campaign.

As far as the institutional impact is concerned, our hypothesis was that Greek candidates were more prone to displaying greater levels of campaign individualisation. Several indicators are used to test this assumption, and most of them display patterns supporting the idea that candidate individualisation is more common in Greece than in Portugal: this is noticeable with respect to the norms of the communicative focus,

the adoption of an individualised or localised agenda and the use of personalised campaign tools.

Our third hypothesis, concerning greater levels of individualisation by candidates from incumbent parties following the bailout, receives no support at all. First, in terms of communicative focus on the campaigns, a shift was observed among incumbent candidates in Portugal towards less personalised campaigns. In the case of Greece, there was a trend towards higher levels of individualisation after the bailout, even if the differences between the two campaigns are not statistically significant. This trend is essentially due to a shift in the position of incumbent candidates in 2012, who moved closer to (and became indistinguishable from) ND in terms of campaign focus norms. Second, in terms of campaign agendas, the differentiation between incumbent and opposition parties is important only in the 2009 Greek election campaign – before the bailout – whereas after the bailout candidates supported by the incumbent actually focused less on constituency-specific topics. Third, in Greece incumbents behaved differently after the bailout, using less individualised campaign tools. This is probably due not to the political context but rather to the nature of the incumbent party. In this case, PASOK decided to adopt a mixed strategy: their candidates were more likely to focus the campaign on themselves than in 2009, but they did not invest in more individualised means – perhaps because they lacked the funds to do so. It is also interesting to note that, in general, right-wing parties seem to adopt more individualised campaigns than left-wing parties, at least at the normative level, but this difference is contingent and depends more on context than on ideological positions.

The strategies of the incumbent parties therefore seem to be different in Portugal and Greece after the bailout. In Portugal, the PS probably thought the best strategy was to use the image of the party and of its leader instead of granting its local candidates more freedom and space, even if the incumbent prime minister and the party as a whole were being blamed for the economic situation and, therefore, a resounding electoral defeat was expected (Magalhães 2014). In Greece, financial constraints and the grand coalition between PASOK and ND may have blurred the differences in campaign strategies and no clear trend for the incumbent emerged either before or after the bailout. Further research is needed to examine more deeply the impact of accountability mechanisms (or lack thereof) on campaign strategies and candidate personalisation, as well as on the differences between left- and right-wing parties.

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Notes

1. We consider PASOK the incumbent party for two reasons: it was responsible for the bailout, and the grand coalition with ND lasted only a few months.

2. According to the data, the proportion of candidates elected in the most recent election was higher in Portugal than in Greece (31.7 per cent and 17.8 per cent, respectively, in the 2009 elections). In Portugal this proportion increased to 39.4 per cent of elected candidates in the 2011 elections; no data are available for the Greek case. We believe that this difference does not substantially alter the interpretation of the main results, as both countries use list systems which encourage candidates to improve the overall performance of the party.

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